

CHARD

FNH-00561M

by
Julie Cascio
Home Economist



Nutrition and Health...

Chard contains a large amount of Vitamin A. It is high in calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and sodium. One cup chopped chard has 35 calories.

Selection...

Chard is known by several names—Swiss chard, leaf beet, seakettle beet, and spinach beet are a few. It is a large, leaf vegetable with wide flat stems similar to celery. The stems may be yellow, red or white in color. In the store, select chard with fresh green leaves. Avoid yellow, brown, wilted or torn leaves.

When harvesting from the garden, cut off the outer leaves 1½ inches above the ground when they are young and tender (about 8 to 12 inches long).

Storage...

Store chard in the refrigerator. Store unwashed leaves in plastic bags in refrigerator crisper drawer for 2 to 3 days. The stalks can be stored longer if separated from the leaves.

Home Preservation...

Chard leaves freeze well after blanching, but the stems become soggy. Canned chard is similar to canned spinach.

To Freeze:

1. Rinse chard in several changes of cold water, lifting leaves out and leaving sand and soil behind. Separate the stems from the leaves.
2. Bring 4 quarts of water to a rolling boil. Drop about 1 pound of whole leaves into boiling water, cover and blanch for 2 minutes. Blanch stems for 3 minutes.

3. Remove immediately from boiling water and immerse in an ice water bath for 2 minutes. Drain.
4. Pack in zip-closure freezer bags or freezer containers, leaving no airspace. Label, date and freeze at 0°F for up to 1 year.

Preparation...

Young tender chard leaves can be eaten raw in salads and sandwiches. Chard can be used in place of spinach in any recipe. When cooking older chard, the stems should be separated from the leaves as they require longer cooking.

Chard is a tender green and benefits from a brief cooking period. Spinach, beet greens and kale may be prepared in a similar manner.

Recipe

Steamed Swiss Chard

2 pounds Swiss chard
¼ cup water, plus water for washing chard
salt and pepper
1 tablespoon butter (optional)

Wash greens by swishing them in cool water, one handful at a time. Remove the stems and chop into 1-inch pieces. Stack the leaves and roll them together. Cut across the roll with a sharp knife. Repeat for additional bundles of leaves.

Heat a skillet over medium heat. Add ¼ cup water and chopped stems to pan. Cook 4 minutes. Add the wet, chopped leaves one handful at a time. Stir after each addition. After all the greens have been added, cover with a tight fitting lid and cook 2 to 3 minutes. They should be wilted but still bright green in color. Season with salt, pepper and butter, if desired. Serve immediately.